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ABSTRACT

A study of student interest was carried out focusing on current reading and media interests of high school boys as compared with those of high school girls and identifying changes in those interests since Paul Witty conducted similar research 20 years earlier. The sample randomly selected 300 ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students from a public school district comparable to the districts used in the earlier study. It was found that compared to the earlier study, high school students now report they spend less time reading, fewer use the public library, there is more interest in fiction, a greater preference for contemporary novels and lesser preference for classics, a stronger interest among boys for sports magazines, and more time is spent televiewing and listening to the radio. It was also found that boys prefer stories involving action and adventure while girls prefer romance, humor, and mystery; girls prefer "Seventeen" magazine while boys enjoy sports magazines as well as adult and mechanics magazines; more boys than girls read the newspapers and they prefer sports, comics, and feature stories, in that order, while girls choose comics, feature stories, and the entertainment section, in that order; and boys and girls both prefer comedy television shows. (TJ)

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CHANGES IN THE READING AND MEDIA INTERESTS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TODAY

The issue of student interest is fundamental to the educational process. Educational theorists and researchers alike have stressed its importance (Dewey, 1938; Thorndike, 1949; Witty, 1961; Watson, 1965; Weinstein and Fantini, 1970; Judy, 1974). Motivation and learning are impossible without engaging the student's interests as they address his/her needs, concerns, and goals.

What those interests are, however, is at best transitory. Over the past twenty years, societal concerns have continually evolved, assuming new directions. For education to remain relevant to the ever changing student, periodic re-assessments of his/her interests are necessary, particularly in the teaching of English, where these interests are essential to the design of a literature program (Burton & Simmons, 1965; Hillocks, 1971; Purves & Beach, 1972).

Although vitalization of the English curriculum may be accomplished in various ways, a relatively easy method is simply to help students experience exciting contacts with books which are relevant to their interests and experiences. Abbot (1902) saw the importance of utilizing pupils' interests, suggesting that the teacher use them as links on which to introduce other interests.

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Boys and girls in grades nine through twelve were asked to indicate their favorite television shows. Although Witty lists specific titles (Table 17B), the current findings are reported as types of programs (Table 17A) in the hope that this method will offer a more lasting indication of interests, since some specific programs are discontinued after a few seasons.

The comedy show is currently the favorite type of television program as chosen by boys and girls at both the upper and lower grade levels. In grades nine and ten 82.3 percent of the boys choose among the following four categories: comedy, feature films, sports, and detective/police. The greater percentage of girls at the same level limit themselves to slightly different choices: comedy, serials, feature films, detective/police, and variety/specials.

In grades eleven and twelve, approximately seventy-five percent of the boys and girls currently prefer to watch either comedy or detective/police programs. Sex differences are less pronounced in the higher grades with a significant level of .0284 than they are in the lower grades where the significance level is .0000.

In order to provide a better test of significance in the current study, the less popular categories were combined and the chi square test applied again. Combined categories were listed as "other"; they are as follows: news, medical, adventure, plays, family shows, talk shows, cartoons, and game shows. Using this test, statistically significant

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While interest inventories had long been part of the literature, in the late 1950's Paul Witty conducted a comprehensive interest inventory that investigated student reading, media, and vocational interests. As Witty said, the curriculum should reflect the breadth and balance of student living. It was Witty's hypothesis that the school curriculum, and specifically the English curriculum, should deal with the total student, the student as perhaps he/she should be (an avid reader with wide-ranging reading interests) and as he/she is (a non-reader largely occupied with mass media and work).

Witty's comprehensive study is now twenty years old. The world has changed much, and students have changed along with it. Race and feminism have become important, and programs for the disadvantaged have become an issue in education. Fewer academic and relatively more average and below average students are college bound. Similarily, socio-economic and grading patterns have changed over the years. For these reasons replication and expansion of earlier studies are needed if the curriculum is to remain relevant.

Although this researcher has investigated and reported on the reading, media, and other selected interests of students in grades nine through twelve as related to sex, race, academic level, socio-economic status, and achievement in English, this article focuses on current reading and media interests of high school boys as compared with those of high school girls and identifies changes in these interests since Witty published his results. In order to make these comparisons, this study replicates in part the cooperative project carried on between and the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, under the direction of , professor of education, , (1959).

Witty's original project encompassed grades three through nine; his investigation was then extended to include pupils in grades ten through twelve, with findings analyzed on the basis of both grade and sex. The current study is limited to grades nine through twelve, and favorite magazines and television programs are identified by subject matter rather than by title as they were in the Witty study.

In the original Witty study, subjects were selected from the Evanston Township high schools in Evanston, Illinois. Witty noted that many parents of those students were self-employed businessmen executives, professional people, or skilled workers. Representative of the industrial community were pupils from secondary schools in Gary, Indiana, where many parents were skilled and semi-skilled workers.

In the current study, the sample was randomly selected from the tota of ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade pupils in a public school district located in southeastern , which has become a suburb of . It is centered in an old central borough which comprises approximately thirty percent of the total district population. Surrounding the central borough are six townships, both suburban and semi-rural in character. Almost seventy percent of the pupils in the district come from these locations and are comparable to the population in the Evanston schools. Students from the central borough are roughly comparable to the Gary, Indiana population in the Witty study.

The Witty sample consisted of three hundred students from each grade level; identical sample sizes were used in the current study.

The chi square test was used to analyze categorical data. An analysis of variance was used to analyze continuous data. Although .05 was the level of acceptance, exact significance levels are reported.

Analysis of Student Interests Reported by Sex and Grade: Comparison of Current Findings with Witty Study

Reading

Pupils in this study, as in Witty's, were asked how much time they spend reading "outside" of school. The investigation reveals that almost one-half of all the boys questioned say that they spend fifteen minutes or less each day reading "outside" of school. The amount of time girls spend reading is more equally divided among the three categories. In grades eleven and twelve 32.6 percent of the girls report reading fifteen minutes or less daily, 34.5 percent report spending from thirty to sixty minutes reading each day, and 32.9 percent in the group report that they generally read for more than an hour each day.

The current study confirms Witty's findings (Table 1B) that girls at both grade levels report that they spend more time reading than do boys. However, students do not appear to be reading as much today as they did at the time of the Witty study.

Sex differences are statistically significant at the .0000 level for both the higher and lower grades. See Table 1A.

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Table 1A (Current Study)

Time Spent in Daily Reading Outside of School
(99% return)

	Grades 9 and 10		Grades 11 and 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
15 minutes or less	46.7	30.5	50.9	32.6
30 minutes to 1 hour	31.8	31.9	33.1	34.5
Over 1 hour	21.5	37.6	16.0	32.9

Table 1B *(Witty Study)*

Time Spent in Daily Reading Outside of School
(82% return)

Boys	Girls
Grades 9 and 10	
1.3 hours	1.4 hours
Grades 11 and 12	
1.3 hours	1.4 hours

Although many pupils report spending less than one hour per day reading, they do not lack encouragement from their parents. Table 2 shows that more than two-thirds of the boys and girls in both groups say their parents encourage them to read. While boys at both grade levels receive more support than girls, the boys in grades eleven and twelve are encouraged most of all. Sex differences are statistically significant at the .05 level for grades eleven and twelve.

Table 2

Percentage of Pupils Whose Parents Encourage Them to Read
(99% response)

	Grades 9 and 10		Grades 11 and 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Yes	66.9	63.4	72.1	64.5
No	33.1	36.6	27.9	35.5

Table 3A indicates that more girls than boys continue to have cards for the public library, but greater percentages in each group do not have them as compared with Witty's findings shown in Table 3B. For this question the most noticeable difference between the findings of the current study and Witty's is the larger percentage of boys in grades nine and ten which has risen from 29.0 to 48.5, and the greater percentage of girls in grades eleven and twelve which has risen from 16.1 to 31.4, who do not have cards for the public library.

In the current study the chi square test indicates a statistically significant sex difference at the .0001 level for grades nine and ten, where a greater percentage of girls than boys have cards for the public library. Not only do fewer boys and girls today have cards for the public library, but when asked how often they get books from the library, an average of 73.1 of pupils in all groups say they seldom get books, perhaps only once or twice a year. See Table 4.

Table 3A (Current Study)

Percentage of Pupils Who Have Public Library Cards
(99% return)

	Grades 9 and 10		Grades 11 and 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Yes	51.5	68.0	62.3	68.6
No	48.5	32.0	37.7	31.4

Table 3B *(Witty Study)*

Percentage of Pupils Who Have Public Library Cards
(96% return)

	Grades 9 and 10		Grades 11 and 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Yes	71.0	79.8	69.7	83.9
No	29.0	20.2	30.3	16.1

Table 4

Frequency of Obtaining Books From the Public Library
(99% return)

	Grades 9 and 10		Grades 11 and 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Once a week	1.3	3.7	1.4	1.6
Once every 2 to 4 weeks	12.3	17.4	13.9	14.7
Less than once a month	10.6	10.1	11.1	9.4
Hardly ever, once or twice a year	75.8	68.8	73.5	74.3

The reading of both boys and girls has become more heavily influenced by each of the three media as shown in Table 5A. Compared with Witty's findings shown in Table 5B, more than twice as many ninth and tenth grade boys today feel that television and movies influence their reading, and 7.1 percent say that radio is an influence. The percentages of boys in grades nine and ten reporting radio influences their reading is more than four times greater today than at the time of the Witty study, even though the percentages are relatively low. For boys in grades eleven and twelve, the direct bearing of television on reading has almost doubled, while the influence of movies has risen only from 45.8 percent to 52.5 percent. Results are even more pronounced for girls. In grades nine and ten, 58.7 percent of the girls currently report that television influences their reading, which is more than three times as many as reported the influence of television in the Witty study. More than twice as many eleventh and twelfth grade girls today, as compared with those in the earlier study, find television to be influential; however, the percentage of this group who consider movies to have some influence on their reading has risen only slightly, from 63.4 percent to 74.9 percent.

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In the current study there is a statistically significant difference between boys and girls regarding the influence of television and movies on their reading. There is no statistically significant difference between them regarding the influence of radio. (TV at .003, movies at .0000)

Table 5A (Current Study)

Influence of Television, Radio, and Movies Upon Reading
(96% return)

	Grades 9 and 10		Grades 11 and 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Television				
Yes	39.6	58.7	33.6	45.7
No	60.4	41.3	66.4	54.3
Radio				
Yes	7.1	4.2	6.2	3.8
No	92.9	95.8	93.8	96.2
Movies				
Yes	65.7	81.6	52.5	74.9
No	34.3	18.4	47.5	25.1

Table 5B *(Witty Study)*

Influence of Television, Radio, and Movies Upon Reading
(99% return)

	Grades 9 and 10		Grades 11 and 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Television				
Yes	18.1	15.0	15.1	16.7
No	81.9	85.0	84.9	83.3
Radio				
Yes	1.5	2.1	2.7	2.1
No	98.5	97.9	97.3	97.9
Movies				
Yes	36.8	38.5	45.8	63.4
No	63.2	61.5	54.2	36.6

When asked what kinds of reading they liked, students in each group chose fiction as their favorite. See Table 6A. This preference was also indicated by the girls in both Witty

groups, as shown in Table 6B. The boys at that time liked both fiction and articles in newspapers and magazines almost equally.

The current study shows that while the gap between their first and second choice has widened for boys in both groups, it is most significant with the girls, who now choose fiction as their overwhelming favorite. Approximately three times as many ninth and tenth grade girls selected fiction as preferred reading compared with the percentage choosing articles in newspapers and magazines. Also, more than five times as many eleventh and twelfth grade girls selected fiction as a first choice over the second choice of articles in newspapers and magazines. Biography continues to rank third, but currently fewer pupils place it there. Poetry, essay, and drama are still the least favored choices, just as they were found to be at the time of the Witty Study. Currently, statistically significant sex differences occur at the .0000 level for grades nine and ten as well as eleven and twelve.

Table 6A (Current Study)

Kinds of Reading Liked
(95% return)

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
Fiction	47.0	Fiction	65.7
Articles in newspapers and magazines	40.6	Articles in newspapers and magazines	18.0
Biography	9.2	Biography	9.0
Essay	1.4	Poetry	3.8
Poetry	1.1	Plays	1.7
Plays	.7	Essay	1.7
	Grades 11 and 12		
Fiction	50.5	Fiction	70.6
Articles in newspapers and magazines	33.3	Articles in newspapers and magazines	12.7
Biography	10.6	Biography	7.4
Plays	2.9	Poetry	6.7
Essay	1.8	Plays	1.7
Poetry	.7	Essay	1.0

Table 6B *(Witty Study)*

Kinds of Reading Liked
(98% return)

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
Articles in newspapers and magazines	32.0	Fiction	30.4
Fiction	31.3	Articles in newspapers and magazines	26.0
Biography	22.4	Biography	17.9
Plays	5.7	Plays	13.3
Essays	5.4	Poetry	7.0
Poetry	3.2	Essays	5.4
	Grades 11 and 12		
Articles in newspapers and magazines	30.9	Fiction	32.6
Fiction	30.7	Articles in newspapers and magazines	25.2
Biography	23.4	Biography	19.0
Essays	6.7	Plays	12.4
Plays	6.6	Poetry	6.2
Poetry	1.7	Essays	4.6

Table 7A shows that sex differences are again noticeable as they were in the Witty study (Table 7B) when pupils reported the kinds of stories they liked. In the current study statistically significant sex differences occur at the .0000 level for grades eleven and twelve and at the 0 level for grades nine and ten. Boys and girls do not make the same story choices.

Science fiction, still one of the boys' favorites, also appears now among the first five choices of eleventh and twelfth grade girls. Romance continues to be the favorite kind of story for all girls but does not appear in the first five choices made by boys in either group. As in the Witty study, girls continue to express a preference for romance, humor, and mystery. Boys, in general, continue to prefer stories involving action and adventure.

Table 7A (Current Study)

Kinds of Stories Liked
(98% return)

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
Sports	21.9	Romance	35.8
Adventure	19.2	Humor	17.7
Science Fiction	18.2	Mystery	17.4
Humor	17.1	Adventure	13.7
Mystery	11.6	Animal	6.5
Animal	6.2	Sports	4.8
Western	2.4	Science Fiction	2.0
Romance	2.1	Careers	1.0
Careers	1.4	Western	1.0
	Grades 11 and 12		
Adventure	32.7	Romance	30.4
Science Fiction	23.5	Humor	21.2
Humor	17.3	Mystery	15.5
Mystery	13.5	Adventure	14.8
Animal	5.4	Science Fiction	7.8
Sports	2.7	Animal	4.9
Romance	1.9	Careers	3.2
Careers	1.5	Sports	1.1
Western	1.5	Western	1.1

Table 7B *(Witty Study)*

Kinds of Stories Liked
(95% return)

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
Adventure	63.7	Romance	71.4
Mystery	55.4	Mystery	55.1
Science Fiction	44.9	Humor	49.3
Humor	39.3	Adventure	31.3
Westerns	19.1	Animal	10.9
	Grades 11 and 12		
Adventure	67.3	Romance	64.6
Mystery	53.3	Humor	52.5
Humor	49.4	Mystery	47.1
Science Fiction	33.1	Adventure	41.7
Westerns	16.3	Career	22.9

Table 8A lists the books pupils currently prefer. A comparison with choices made at the time of the Witty study (Table 8B) shows a trend away from the clasic titles and adolescent literature. Gone With the Wind remains a favorite with girls in grades eleven and twelve. It is the only title held over from the Witty study.

Table 8A (Current Study)

Best Books Read in Grades 9 through 12
(Rank Order)

Boys	Girls
Grades 9 and 10	
Jaws	Jaws
The Omen	Go Ask Alice
Alive	The Outsiders
The Exorcist	The Exorcist
Go Ask Alice	The Omen
	Sunshine
Grades 11 and 12	
Jaws	Gone With the Wind
The Exorcist	The Exorcist
Helter Skelter	Rich Man Poor Man
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid	Sunshine
	Helter Skelter
Brian's Song	Jaws
The Outsiders	Once is not Enough
D-Day	Go Ask Alice

Table 8B *(Witty Study)*

Best Books Read in Grades 9 through 12
(Rank Order)

Boys	Girls
Grades 9 and 10	
The Yearling	Gone With the Wind
Kon Tiki	Little Women
Around the World in 80 Days	Sue Barton
Tom Sawyer	Kon Tiki
Hardy Boys	Jane Eyre
30 Seconds over Tokyo	
Robionson Crusoe	
Three Musketeers	

Boys	Girls
Grades 11 and 12	
Kon Tiki	Gone With the Wind
Old Man and the Sea	Tale of Two Cities
Tale of Two Cities	Jane Eyre
Huckleberry Finn	The Robe
Cry the Beloved Country	Little Women
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea	
Gone With the Wind	
Tom Sawyer	
Mysterious Island	
The Yearling	

As shown in Table 9B, Witty reported that an average of 46.3 percent of ninth and tenth grade pupils and 33.6 percent of those in grades eleven and twelve read series books. The percentages have decreased in every group (Table 9A). The most outstanding difference in the findings of the earlier and current study is the drop from Witty's 45.8 percent to the current 35.6 percent for boys, and from Witty's 47.8 percent to the current 31.1 percent for girls in grades nine and ten. Witty found that more girls than boys in grades nine and ten read series books. The positions in those grades are reversed today.

Also, the current findings show that significantly more boys than girls in grades eleven and twelve are reading series books about such things as historical events, science, careers, or heroes. The difference concurs with the Witty findings.

Table 9A (Current Study)

Pupils Who Read Series Books
(96% return)

	Grades 9 and 10		Grades 11 and 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Yes	35.6	31.1	33.8	24.8
No	64.4	68.9	66.2	75.2

Table 9B *(Witty Study)*

Pupils Who Read Series Books
(96.3% return)

	Grades 9 and 10		Grades 11 and 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Yes	45.8	47.8	37.2	30.0
No	54.2	52.2	62.8	70.0

Witty reported that all pupils chose the picture magazine as their favorite. See Table 10B. Other periodicals also listed in his findings include: Saturday Evening Post, Time, Sports Illustrated, Seventeen, McCall's, Ladies' Home Journal, and Reader's Digest. Life and Look, the picture magazines Witty mentions, are no longer published.

For this study, categories of types of magazines rather than specific titles are used. Table 10A indicates that over one-third of all boys questioned prefer sports magazines, while the greater majority of girls rank teen or fashion magazines as their favorite. Fewer boys and girls in grades nine and ten now prefer periodicals dealing with news or current events as compared with Witty's figures; however, news magazines are still among the top choices of both boys and girls in grades eleven and twelve. Currently boys list adult magazines and girls include sports varieties among their preferences. This is a change from the Witty

findings, as is the inclusion of digests among the first five choices of boys in both groups. Currently sex differences are statistically significant at the 0 level for grades nine and ten as well as grades eleven and twelve.

Table 10A (Current Study)

Magazines Liked Best
(85% return)

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
Sports	34.9	Teen/Fashion	52.9
Mechanics	19.9	Entertainment	11.3
Adult	16.9	Sports	9.1
Entertainment	6.6	Black	6.9
Digests	5.9	Digests	6.2
Science	5.5	Stories/Homemaking	5.8
News	4.8	News	3.6
Black	3.7	Mechanics	1.8
Teen/Fashion	1.1	Science	1.5
Stories/Homemaking	.7	Adult	.7
	Grades 11 and 12		
Sports	37.9	Teen/Fashion	43.3
News	17.8	Stories/Homemaking	16.7
Mechanics	14.2	News	13.9
Adult	11.0	Sports	9.1
Digests	5.9	Black	6.0
Entertainment	4.6	Digests	5.6
Black	4.1	Science	1.6
Teen/Fashion	1.8	Entertainment	1.6
Stories/Homemaking	1.4	Adult	1.6
Science	1.4	Mechanics	1.8

Table 10B *(Witty Study)*

Magazines Liked Best
(97% return)

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
Life	44.4	Life	41.1
Saturday Evening Post	25.8	Seventeen	30.5
Look	21.9	Look	19.9
Time	12.2	Saturday Evening Post	19.9
Sports Illustrated	7.9	McCall's	9.9
		Ladies' Home Journal	9.6
		Reader's Digest	9.6
	Grades 11 and 12		
Life	57.9	Life	53.1
Saturday Evening Post	31.3	Seventeen	46.0
Look	27.0	Saturday Evening Post	26.3
Time	19.7	Look	23.8
Sports Illustrated	15.0	Reader's Digest	14.6

Although Witty did not investigate this particular question, pupils taking part in the current survey were asked whether or not they read a newspaper every day. See Table 11. The most significant difference seems to occur between the grade levels rather than between the sexes. The chi square test indicates a statistically significant difference at the .01 level between boys in grades nine and ten and those in grades eleven and twelve, and at the .005 level between girls in the higher and in the lower grades. More boys and girls in grades nine and ten read a newspaper daily as compared with their counterparts in grades eleven and twelve. Almost sixty-two percent of the ninth and tenth grade boys but only fifty percent of the eleventh and twelfth grade boys read a newspaper regularly. Approximately fifteen percent more girls in grades nine and ten than in eleven and twelve read the newspaper.

No statistically significant difference regarding the habit of reading a newspaper occurs between the sexes at the lower grade level; it does exist at the .0260 level between the boys and girls in the eleventh and twelfth grades.

Table 11

Pupils Who Read A Newspaper Regularly
(97% response)

	Grades 9 and 10		Grades 11 and 12	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Yes	61.8	55.4	49.8	40.1
No	38.2	44.6	50.2	59.9

Table 12 indicates which parts of the newspaper are preferred by participants in the current study. The favorites continue to be the same as those reported by Witty, namely, sports, comics, and news.

The chi square test reveals current statistically significant differences existing at the .0000 level between the sexes at both the higher and lower grade levels regarding their preference for particular sections of the newspaper. Almost twice as many boys, at both grade levels, now prefer the sports section over the comics, which is their second choice. All girls currently rank comics as their favorite section. Over fifty percent of all boys prefer the sports and comics sections, and more than fifty percent of all girls prefer reading comics and feature stories to other parts of the newspaper.

Table 12

Parts of Newspaper Preferred by Pupils
(96% return)

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
Sports	46.9	Comics	37.3
Comics	26.2	Feature Stories	23.3
Feature Stories	11.9	Entertainment	13.9
Miscellaneous	7.7	Sports	10.5
Entertainment	4.2	Personal Help Columns	8.7
Editorials	2.4	Miscellaneous	5.6
Personal Help Columns	.7	Editorials	.7
	Grades 11 and 12		
Sports	40.4	Comics	31.6
Comics	22.8	Feature Stories	27.0
Feature Stories	20.6	Enterainment	15.1
Entertainment	7.9	Personal Help Columns	10.2
Editorials	3.4	Sports	9.1
Personal Help Columns	2.6	Editorials	4.6
Miscellaneous	2.2	Miscellaneous	2.5

Table 13A shows the responses given by pupils when they were asked to rank various activities, including reading books, magazines, newspapers, and comics, in their order of preference. The Witty findings shown in Table 13B indicate that both boys and girls in grades nine and ten preferred watching television to any other activity. Also, at that time, boys, but not girls, at the upper grade level ranked television as their favorite activity.

In the current study, watching television is not listed as a favorite pastime by any group. Movies outside the home are now preferred more often. The most noticeable difference appears to exist between grade levels rather than between the sexes. More boys in grades eleven and twelve currently report a preference for movies over television. The girls in this group, just as their counterparts in the Witty study, favor going to the movies over any other activity. A statistically significant difference occurs at the .005 level between grade levels for girls and at the .05 level between grade levels for boys.

A substantial similarity exists between the Witty results and those in the current study. In each instance, pupils at both levels, girls as well as boys, list all reading activities as their least favorites.

In order to provide a more accurate chi square test of differences between the sexes in given grades, the following categories were combined: reading the newspaper, reading

magazines, and reading comic books. Results show that statistically significant differences occur at the .005 level between sexes in grades nine and ten and also between them in grades eleven and twelve.

Table 13A (Current Study)

Activity Preferences of Pupils
(Rank Order)
(97% return)

Boys	Girls
Grades 9 and 10	
Going to the Movies	Going to the Movies
Watching Television	Listening to the Radio
Listening to the Radio	Watching Television
Reading Stories in Books	Reading Stories in Books
Reading Magazines	Reading Comics
Reading the Newspaper	Reading Magazines
Reading Comics	Reading the Newspaper
Grades 11 and 12	
Going to the Movies	Going to the Movies
Watching Television	Listening to the Radio
Listening to the Radio	Watching Television
Reading Stories in Books	Reading Stories in Books
Reading the Newspaper	Reading Magazines
Reading Magazines	Reading the Newspaper
Reading Comics	Reading Comics

Table 13B *(Witty Study)*

Activity Preferences of Pupils
(Rank Order)
(97% return)

Boys	Girls
Grades 9 and 10	
Watching Television	Watching Television
Going to the Movies	Listening to the Radio
Listening to the Radio	Going to the Movies
Reading Magazines	Reading Stories in Books
Reading Stories in Books	Reading Magazines
Reading the Newspaper	Reading the Newspaper
Reading Comics	Reading Comics
Grades 11 and 12	
Watching Television	Going to the Movies
Going to the Movies	Watching Television
Listening to the Radio	Listening to the Radio
Reading Magazines	Reading Stories in Books
Reading the Newspaper	Reading Magazines
Reading Stories in Books	Reading the Newspaper
Reading Comics	Reading Comics

Television, Radio, and Movies

Table 14 shows the number of hours pupils currently report devoting daily to relevision. The figures in Table 15A showing the number of hours spent weekly in televiewing concur with Witty's findings (Table 15B), that boys and girls in grades nine and ten spend more time watching television than do their counterparts in grades eleven and twelve. Boys at the lower grade level continue to view television more than do girls in that group. The trend has reversed, however, at the higher level, with more girls than boys watching television for longer periods of time. In every group the actual number of hours has increased with the average rising by 9.56 hours for pupils in grades nine and ten and 7.85 for those in grades eleven and twelve, yet television is not reportedly the favorite leisure activity.

An analysis of variance indicates that currently a statistically significant difference exists at the .002 level between girls in the higher and lower grades and at the .0001 level between boys at both grade levels. Although no statistically significant difference occurs between the sexes in grades nine and ten, one exists at the .041 level between boys and girls in grades eleven and twelve concerning the number of hours they spend watching television.

Table 14

Average Hours Spent Daily in Televiewing
(94% return)

Grades	Boys	Girls	Mean Hours
9 and 10	3.66	3.51	3.58
11 and 12	2.65	3.02	2.85

Table 15A (Current Study)

Average Hours Spent Weekly in Televiewing
(94% return)

Grades	Boys	Girls	Mean Hours
9 and 10	25.62	24.57	25.06
11 and 12	18.55	21.14	19.95

Table 15B *(Witty Study)*

Average Hours Spent Weekly in Televiewing
(91% return)

Grades	Boys	Girls	Average
9 and 10	16.0	14.7	15.5
11 and 12	12.7	11.4	12.1

Even though television is not currently reported as being the most favored leisure pursuit, Table 16 shows that very few pupils report not having a television set at home. The majority have access to two or more sets. Witty earlier reported an average of 38 percent as having two or more sets; currently 87.65 percent of the pupils questioned fall into that category.

Table 16

Number of Television Sets Pupils Report Having at Home
(96% return)

Grades 9 and 10	Percent	Grades 11 and 12	Percent
None	.7	None	.2
One set	12.6	One set	11.2
Two sets	36.7	Two sets	41.0
Three sets	28.7	Three sets	24.3
Four sets	14.7	Four sets	13.3
Five sets	5.5	Five sets	7.2
Six or more sets	1.3	Six or more sets	2.9

differences occur between the sexes at the .005 level for grades nine and ten and at the .025 level for grades eleven and twelve.

Table 17A (Current Study)

Favorite Television Programs
(87% return)

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
Comedy	30.0	Comedy	36.1
Feature Films	18.5	Serials	12.3
Sports	17.1	Feature Films	12.3
Detective/Police	16.7	Detective/Police	11.2
Science Fiction	3.8	Variety/Specials	10.1
Educational	3.5	Family Shows	5.8
Adventure	2.8	Sports	4.3
Variety/Specials	2.1	Science Fiction	2.2
Cartoons	1.7	Medical	1.8
Medical	1.0	Adventure	1.4
Family Shows	.7	Talk Shows	1.1
Talk Shows	.7	Game Shows	.7
Serials	.7	Educational	.4
Plays	.3	Cartoons	.4
Game Shows	.3	Plays	0
	Grades 11 and 12		
Comedy	45.0	Comedy	49.4
Detective/Police	28.0	Detective/Police	25.8
Sports	9.2	Feature Films	4.5
Feature Films	5.0	Serials	4.1
Science Fiction	4.1	Science Fiction	3.0
Educational	2.3	Educational	2.2
Cartoons	1.8	Sports	2.2
News	1.4	Family Shows	2.2
Family Shows	.9	Variety/Specials	1.9
Variety/Specials	.5	Medical	1.5
Medical	.5	News	1.1
Adventure	.5	Cartoons	.7
Talk Shows	.5	Plays	.4
Serials	.5	Talk Shows	.4
Plays	0	Game Shows	.4

Table 17B *(Witty Study)*

Favorite Television Programs of Pupils
(98.5% return)

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
Maverick	24.4	American Bandstand	22.3
Gunsmoke	9.7	Dick Clark Show	14.0
Sea Hunt	9.4	Maverick	13.3
Rifleman	8.5	Father Knows Best	12.0
Shock Theatre	8.2	Ozzie and Harriet	7.3
		Danny Thomas	7.3
	Grades 11 and 12		
Maverick	23.5	American Bandstand	20.6
Steve Allen	14.2	Dick Clark Show	14.6
Gunsmoke	13.8	Father Knows Best	13.8
Sports	8.6	Maverick	12.9
Have Gun Will Travel	8.6	Jack Paar	11.3
Sea Hunt	7.5		

Table 18 shows the average number of hours pupils in grades nine through twelve report devoting to radio daily. Witty reported that on the average ninth grade pupils gave eight hours a week to radio. Currently (Table 19) boys in grades nine and ten report giving more than twice that many hours to this particular media, and girls in these grades spend three times that amount of time listening to the radio weekly. Both boys and girls in grades eleven and twelve say they devote approximately twenty-three hours each week to radio.

An analysis of variance administered on the current findings indicates that there is no statistically significant differnce between grade levels for boys and girls with regard to the amount of time they spend listening to the radio, but a difference exists between the sexes at the .000 level within grades nine and ten and also at the .012 level within grades eleven and twelve.

Table 18 (Current Study)

Average Hours Spent Daily Listening to Radio
(90% return)

Grades	Boys	Girls	Mean Hours
9 and 10	2.55	3.55	3.05
11 and 12	2.82	3.35	3.10

Table 19 (Current Study)

Average Hours Spent Weekly Listening to Radio
(90% return)

Grades	Boys	Girls	Mean Hours
9 and 10	17.88	24.84	21.36
11 and 12	19.76	23.45	21.61

The current study (Table 20A) concurs with Witty's findings (Table 20B) that boys and girls prefer to listen to music more than to any other type of program on radio.

Presently there is a statistically significant difference at the .0003 level between boys and girls in grades nine and ten, and at the .0002 level between boys and girls in grades eleven and twelve, regarding their tastes in radio programs.

Another chi square test was administered with FM, popular music, rock music, and all types of music combined as one category, in order to test for differences between the sexes regarding their preference for music or other kinds of programs. Results indicate a statistically signficant difference at the .005 level between boys and girls in grades nine and ten, and at the .05 level between boys and girls in grades eleven and twelve, concerning their preference for

music and non-music types of radio programs. Although there is a sex difference at both grade levels, fewer girls than boys listen to programs other than music on the radio. Boys show more diversity in their selections.

Table 20A (Current Study)

Favorite Radio Programs
(83% return)

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
Rock Music	37.9	Popular Music	37.8
Popular Music	23.9	Rock Music	33.1
All Kinds of Music	12.1	All Kinds of Music	12.6
FM Stations/Show Tunes	11.4	FM Stations/Show Tunes	11.5
Comedy	4.6	No Favorite	1.8
No Favorite	3.6	Sports	1.1
Sports	3.6	Religious	1.1
News/Talk Shows	2.5	Comedy	.7
Religious	.4	News/Talk Shows	.4
	Grades 11 and 12		
All Kinds of Music	45.5	All Kinds of Music	38.4
Rock Music	19.0	FM Stations/Show Tunes	30.6
FM Stations/Show Tunes	16.0	Rock Music	16.6
Comedy	7.5	Popular Music	5.7
Sports	6.0	Comedy	4.4
Popular Music	3.5	No Favorite	2.6
News/Talk Shows	2.0	News/Talk Shows	1.3
No Favorite	.5	Sports	.4

Table 20B *(Witty Study)*

Favorite Radio Programs
(90% return)

Boys	Percent	Boys	Percent
	Grades 9 and 10		
WJJD	15.5	WJJD	30.9
Howard Miller	13.6	Howard Miller	21.4
Top 40	9.8	WIND	21.0
Jerry Girard	6.4	Jerry Girard	11.1
Vivian Carter	6.4	Vivian Carter	11.1
Wally Phillips	6.4	Top 40	10.7
Music	6.4		
560 Club	6.1		

Boys	Percent	Girls	Percent
	Grades 11 and 12		
Howard Miller	21.7	Howard Miller	45.4
Music	15.8	WJJD	24.5
Wally Phillips	15.8	Music	19.4
WJJD	13.6	Jerry Girard	16.3
News	10.3	WIND	11.2
Jerry Girard	10.3	Wally Phillips	11.2
Top 40	8.7		

Table 21A lists favorite movies currently reported by boys and girls in grades nine through twelve. Witty's findings, shown in Table 21B, indicate a preference for one particular movie by all pupils at both grade levels. Currently boys and girls in grades eleven and twelve make the same first two choices. At the ninth and tenth grade level some titles are listed by both boys and girls but are assigned different ranking.

Table 21A (Current Study)

Favorite Movies in Grades 9 through 12
(Rank Order)

Boys	Girls
Grades 9 and 10	
Earthquake	The Omen
Jaws	Ode to Billy Joe
Silent Movie	Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid	Jaws
The Omen	The Way We Were
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	Earthquake
Grades 11 and 12	
Jaws	Jaws
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid	The Exorcist
Cooley High	Dog Day Afternoon
Missouri Breaks	Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid
The Exorcist	Blazing Saddles

Table 21B *(Witty Study)*

Favorite Movies in Grades 9 and 12
(Rank Order)

Boys	Girls
Grades 9 and 10	
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof	Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
The Blob	Reluctant Debutante
In Love and War	Damn Yankees
Defiant Ones	In Love and War
Bridge on River Kwai	Defiant Ones
Grades 11 and 12	
Cat on a Hot Tin Roof	Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
Defiant Ones	Reluctant Debutante
Bridge on River Kwai	Damn Yankees
In Love and War	In Love and War
Ten Commandments	Defiant Ones

When Witty conducted his study, he reported that less time was being spent on some activities which had been popular in the past. One of these he identified as attending movies outside the home. The trend continues. A comparison of results from the current study (Table 22A) with those reported by Witty (Table 22B) suggests that pupils in grades nine through twelve are now attending movies less frequently than they once did. Almost as many boys and girls in grades nine and ten attend movies once or twice a year as attend movies once or twice a month. Both boys and girls in grades eleven and twelve attend movies more frequently than pupils at the lower level, but a little more than one-third continue to see movies outside the home only once or twice a year.

Currently there is no indication of sex differences at either grade level with regard to the frequency of movie attendance outside the home.

Summary

As compared with those taking part in the Witty study, high school students today report that they spend less time reading and that fewer use the public library. They also express a more pronounced interest in fiction.

Boys and girls have remained relatively constant in selecting the kinds of stories they prefer. Boys continue to choose stories involving action and adventure, while girls continue to prefer romance, humor, and mystery. However, while the Witty population included classics among their favorites, currently the preference is for contemporary novels. Essays, plays, and poetry continue as the least favored types of reading for all students in grades nine through twelve.

Picture magazines were the favorites at the time of the Witty survey. At that time girls also enjoyed Seventeen, a teen/fashion magazine that remains popular with girls today. For boys, who previously enjoyed Life, Saturday Evening Post, and Look, the preference is strongest for sports magazines. In addition to news and current event types, boys also choose mechanics and adult magazines. Black magazines are also preferred and are not included in the earlier study. Digests are less often preferred than they were in the past.

More boys and girls in grades nine and ten report that they read a newspaper daily as compared with their counterparts in grades eleven and twelve. At both levels more boys than girls read the newspaper and prefer sports, comics, and feature stories in that order. In rank order girls choose comics, feature stories and the entertainment section of the newspaper.

Just as they did in the Witty study, boys and girls express a preference for radio programs primarily offering music. News/talk and religious programs are most disliked. Witty did not show any ranking for these kinds of radio programs.

Both boys and girls spend more time televiewing now than at the time of the earlier study. According to their estimates, the younger boys and girls now devote approximately twenty-four and one-half hours weekly to television, approximately ten hours more than was reported by their counterparts in the Witty study. In grades eleven and twelve there is an increase of almost eight hours weekly.

Television programs favored by the Witty population were primarily adventures for boys, with music and comedy added to the girls' choices. Both boys and girls currently express an outstanding preference for comedy shows, with detective/police in second place for pupils at the higher grade level, and feature films, sports, and serials among the next most favored types for boys and girls in grades nine and ten.

Witty reported pupils at the ninth grade level giving approximately eight hours weekly to radio. That figure has more than doubled today.

In conclusion, students currently favor books that have also been written as movie scripts. Comparisons of both versions, books and media, could be made; films could also be studied as an art form worthy of consideration for its own sake; film could be used as a motivational force, especially for boys.

Pupils are making minimal use of the library and also indicate a trend away from news and current events in the print media. Perhaps they prefer the more immediate treatment made possible by the non-print media.

Undeniably, modern technology has provided means of communication that require minimum effort on the part of the viewer and/or listener. Reading demands more exertion, but books also offer an almost infinite variety of subject matter as compared with that available on radio and television programs and in films. For this reason, teachers at all grade levels need to be concerned that their students love books and desire to continue reading over a lifetime instead of reducing it to a school oriented activity. Our goal should be to cultivate readers who are appreciative of the pleasure, recreation, and learning that reading can provide. Identifying diversity and/or commonality of student interests helps.

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